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ment funds, we would ask in the name of all that is beautiful and classic in builder's art, where is the encouragement to our undeveloped architecture? Where are the best minds in the profession encouraged by this patronage, working out buildings whose excellence shall vie with our mechanic arts, and whose lasting beauty shall attest a rich intelligence and art really worthy of our day?

## Correspondence.

### ITALY IN 1855-1856.

Rome, 21st January, 1856.

CORNELIUS, the distinguished German painter, who has just received one of the great medals for his cartoons at the Paris Exposition, has been living for two years past in Rome. He is now an old man, but he still occupies himself with his art, and has lately finished a design, which his admirers regard as one of his finest works, and in which, he himself, takes a pleasant unaffected satisfaction. It is now in his studio in the Palazzo Poli.

The work is a highly finished sketch in tempera for a fresco, for the apse of the church proposed to be erected by the royal family of Prussia, in the Campo Lasso at Berlin. It represents the waiting for the Last Judgment, the moment of expectation. The composition is a full, but not complete one. The immense space to be occupied by the fresco, a space of some ninety feet in height (Michael Angelo's Last Judgment is but sixty feet high), affords ample room for many figures, and for the noblest design. Cornelius has introduced, certainly many figures, not fewer than 120.\* He has drawn part of his inspiration from the book of Revelations, but the types of the Apocalypse are strangely mingled with the realities of the Gospel, and the tradition of the church.

In the upper centre of the picture is the Saviour, seated in a glory surrounded and supported by seraphs. At his feet are the four beasts of the Apocalypse. At his right stands the Virgin, and opposite to her St. John the Baptist. Immediately above, the figure of Christ, and forming the upper group in the picture, are a band of angels bearing the instruments of the passion, and on either side are the twenty-four elders, in white raiment, casting down their crowns. Beneath these, outside of the Virgin and of St. John, are two rows of figures, the upper representing martyrs, with palms in their hands, the lower apostles and saints.

Beneath the Saviour is a group of angels, of which, the principal figure holds the not yet opened book of life, while the others have the trumpets of judgment in their hands, awaiting for the signal for sounding them to be given. Below, in a band stretching nearly across the picture, are the chief fathers of the Greek and Latin churches. They rest upon a cloud which serves, as it were, for the base of Heaven, but is connected at each end with earth by aerial steps, as if to signify the union of the church in glory above, with the church in struggle below. On these steps at the right

ascends an angel with a censer, from which the smoke of the incense of prayer is rising; below is another angel helping up a penitent, and at the foot is still another defending a child from a serpent that has wound about his leg. On the other side, at the head of the steps, stands the Archangel, Michael, with his sword drawn, waiting for the order of execution—at the foot advancing toward earth, are three angels, one with the crown of thorns, another with the olive of peace, the third with the palm of victory. In the centre of the lower portion of the picture, between the two stairways of cloud, stands a bare, unadorned altar, surmounted by a cross. At the ends of the altar kneel the present King and Queen of Prussia, surrounded at a little distance by the other members of the royal family.

Such is the composition, which by some of the German critics here, is declared to be the most wonderful of the age. But if this description has been at all intelligible, it has made it obvious, that the first essential of a great composition is absent from this—that essential is unity. No common sympathetic action or mutual relation to be recognized by the imagination, can combine these discordant groups into one common interest. The Last Judgment, however unsuitable it may be for painting, and although only adapted to the coarse materialism of the Dark Ages, is at least, a subject controlled by one great motive. The emotions and the incidents belonging to it, are all distinctly referable to a common end and a single overwhelming interest. But to attempt to represent the moment before the judgment, the moment before the action has commenced, is an attempt at once profane and presumptuous. The more labored and elaborate in detail it may be, the more inadequate it is made. This picture is called a work of spiritual art, but let us be careful in the use of words; is it not rather a work of positive materialism?

No one ever looked at Michael Angelo's Last Judgment, to have his conceptions of the awful day exalted or enlarged. To feel the power even of this most muscular of pictures, one must forget the subject; and look only at the separate figures as studies of anatomy and of drawing. One leaves the Sistine Chapel with no religious awe, with no sense of exaltation; but simply with a clearer acquaintance with Michael Angelo's unparalleled force as a draughtsman, and the conviction that the power exerted by the artist, produces no corresponding effect upon the spectator, when that power is employed upon a subject, before which, all human strength is weakness, and the clearest human conceptions only folly and confusion. But when one looks at this work of Cornelius, one finds not even that excellence in detail, which might awaken an interest in the separate portions of the unconnected whole. It possesses no beauty of color, and no such preëminence in drawing, as to give it any peculiar claim to admiration.

But, moreover, it is one of those pictures which have so far lost the characteristics of pictorial art, as to require an explanation in words of its meaning—not merely of its meaning in details, for explanation of these is of course required in many of the greatest pictures; but explanation of its main object and purpose. However attentively it may be studied, it does not explain itself.

What is the event for which all these figures are gathered together? No figure, no action, no gesture indicates it. If you have seen other pictures, you may guess that it has something to do with the Judgment; or you may be told, what it is by some person who has learned. But who are awaiting judgment? Are the doctors of the church who sit on the cloud to escape the terrible day? Is the penitent whom the angel leads up the steps, already judged and pardoned? Is Michael, the Archangel, waiting with drawn sword to descend upon the royal family of Prussia, who are the only people visible on earth? What bold and empty absurdity! But King Frederick William in uniform here! Cornelius may excuse himself by referring to the early masters, who insert the portraits of their patrons in their most sacred pictures. But there is no parallel. In the one case it was honest superstition commingling with vanity of the patrons' part, that led to such a course; but in this latter instance there is nothing better than the flattery of a courtier and the degradation of an artist.

In the pictures by the old masters, in which a story is treated in episodes, the idea of unity in the general design is lost sight of in the desire to convey the meaning more strongly; by the introduction of various incidents, sometimes disconnected in time and place with each other, sometimes the successive scenes of a continuous story. These are narratives in painting instead of in words, and belonged to that age when pictures supplied the want of books, and when the object and limits of art were most imperfectly understood. But the separate groups in this fresco of Cornelius, although remote from each other in all natural relations, have no episodic character. None of them are complete in themselves, and yet many have so little bearing upon the general design, that one after another might be struck out, and no want would be felt.

It is hardly necessary to examine the originality of a work like this. The main idea is not a new one in Art; and the arrangement reminds one, in portions of the Disputa of Raphael, and in portions of the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel.

So long a discussion of this picture as we have entered upon here, would have served little purpose, were it not a type of many works of recent art, and especially of some of the most celebrated of the present German school. This fresco may or may not be soon forgotten; but the school of which Cornelius has long been the acknowledged head, will, for some time, at least, contrive to exercise an effect more or less powerful upon the progress and prospects of art. The sooner the falseness of the principles upon which it has proceeded, and the consequent comparative worthlessness of its results, are exposed and understood, the better will it be, not merely for Art, but for Religion.

\* One of the latest examples of its use, is that of a statue of the Archangel sitting in expectation, with the trumpet of Judgment in his hands, by Tenerani. It forms a portion of the monument of the Princess Lante, in the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva. It is a simple and striking work. "Especto domini veniis imitatio mea."

\* There are 126.

Two great mistakes seem to be at the foundation of its efforts—one, the rejection of Nature, as the sole source of truth in art—the other, the frequent substitution of mere intellectual force, for spiritual sentiment, so that in place of the harmonious combination of thought and feeling—feeling has been sacrificed, and the intellect itself dwarfed by its absence. Take for instance, Kaulbach's famous picture of the Dispersion of the Races, as an example in which both these errors are peculiarly exhibited. Few pictures have been more praised, or more circulated by engravings in the last few years, than this; and yet it would be difficult to find a picture showing equal capacity on the part of the artist, in which truth to nature was more sacrificed. It is a composition of powerful incongruities, and the power is that of exaggeration, not that of truth. Nor is the absence of truth to nature greater than the absence of sincere feeling. It bears no marks of being an inevitable work of genius. It is rather a block house of the intellect, in which piece after piece of study is filled up, to produce what is meant for a great work. The signs of inspiration are imitated, but its reality is not experienced.\* A striking instance is afforded by another famous German artist, Overbeck, of the manner in which Nature has been disregarded out of deference to a preconceived ideal. In his works, one may see how a man even of sincere religious conviction may fall, when by misfortune, or by fault, he prefers to adopt an affectation, to following the simple truth. Overbeck's style is founded upon that of the masters of the 16th century. Charmed, as every one of sensibility cannot fail to be, with the simplicity, sincerity and the fervor exhibited in the works of the early painters, Overbeck has followed their manner, with the idea of producing the same effect. But the manner of the painters of the 16th century, was shackled and cramped by difficulties, which have long since been broken away, and by ignorance which has long since yielded to knowledge. They painted the best they knew; their charm was not a charm of manner, but of character. A Fra Angelico would paint more angelic angels to-day, than he could four hundred years ago, if he kept the same purity of soul that he then possessed. The beauty and the holiness of which their pictures are fuller than any others that the world has seen, was often rendered *in spite of* and not by means of their technical manner. Had Overbeck lived in a cloister four centuries ago and painted as he does now, his pictures would be very precious as representations of the feeling and the power of an artist of that early time—but being painted to-day, they are only exhibitions of a talent that finds itself in the world too late, and seeks its inspiration in the works of long past men instead of in ever-living Nature, fresh and full of beauty to-day, as on that day when God first looked upon his works and saw it was good. Truth and goodness are the same in one age as in another, and yet the manifestations of truth and goodness

vary with every day and with every human soul. He that would represent beauty as it exists to-day, will find it not in the works of the past, and the heart that desires to know the truth, will seek for it in Him alone who is its source.

It may be laid down as a canon of art, that no work founded on the principle of imitation, can attain any, but an inferior value. If a man occupies himself with art, as with a charge from God (and in no other way can a thoughtful and sincere artist regard it), he will find that the message given to him to deliver, is one which cannot be put into old forms. It is new wine and needs new bottles. In his truth to external Nature, and in his simplicity of feeling lie the tastes of his capacity as a messenger.

Rome, February 17th, 1856—Overbeck formerly had his studio in the Palazzo Cenci—a palace dark and gloomy enough to suit its horrible associations—but he now lives in a pleasant and retired house in the midst of large open grounds, on the Esquiline hill, between the Basilicas of St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore. Every Sunday between twelve and two, his rooms are open, and he receives all those who desire to see his works, in the most kindly and courteous manner. The principal picture upon which he is now engaged, is a large design intended for a ceiling of one of the rooms in the palace of the Popes, on the Quirinal. It represents the scene in the life of our Saviour, when he was brought by the Nazarenes "to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might cast him down; but he passing through the midst of them, went his way." The painter represents the angry Nazarenes upon the brow of the hill, and the Saviour just off the edge of it, supported on a cloud borne by seraphs. The conception is a quaint one, and hardly to be praised. In the execution, two different mannerisms meet together; one, of the exaggeration of the present German school, in some of the countenances of the Jews—the other of the stiff simplicity of the early painters in the countenance and attitude of Christ.

Many of Overbeck's drawings are beautiful from their delicacy and finish. They are superior to his larger works, in so far, as the larger are often only magnified copies of the former, without any increase of power, variety, or fullness, and when colored become hard and cold.

With all their defects, however much they fall short of what is to be desired in works of religious art, Overbeck's picture interests one in the artistic character. It is obvious from them, that he is a man of purity of love and of desire. One cannot but lament, that he was not born before America was discovered to live in the cloister of some old convent, on one of the blue hills of Tuscany, to illuminate parchments, missals and song-books, and to decorate the walls with his pure and pious designs.

Rome, February 10th, 1856. Sunday—The Accademia Tiberina holds its sessions on Sunday evenings in a hall in the Palazzo dei Tadini. It is one of those literary academies, of which, there were formerly so many and some so famous in Italy, and of which the greater number have died out or been crushed out in later years. There is little to be feared or to be hoped from them

now. They would not exist were there any danger of their becoming too liberal.

This evening the large hall of the Academy was poorly lighted with a few oil-lamps, and a few priests and sleepy old gentlemen sat scattered about the room. By degrees the seats were slowly filled; a few ladies came in, a young man lighted up candles, so that one could see the dim frescoes on the walls; two cardinals shuffled in with some bustle and parade, and then the members of the Academy, who were to take part in the evening's performances, appeared from a back room, and took their seats upon the platform fronting the audience. The cardinals, by the way, sat before the rest of the company on old-fashioned gilt chairs.

The performances commenced with the reading by an architect, of a paper, on the restoration of the curious church of San Niciolo in Carcere. It was a good specimen of the old style of academic dissertation. It was the sort of thing in which one might sleep through a century or two without harm. Beginning with Tullus Hostilius, a thousand years before the church was built, continuing through the history of republican Rome, the essay arrived in due time at the commencement of the Christian era, and finally at that of the erection of the church. The narrative was broken by disquisitions on the value of the science of archæology, on the sufferings of the martyrs, on the virtues of his holiness, the reigning Pope, and other more or less remote topics. Then came a shower of facts about the church, rattling down dry and hard on the heads of the audience, and when at length the end arrived, it was received with undeniable satisfaction and applause. The subject was an interesting one, treated by an academician.

When this discourse was finished, the President announced the name of a young priest, who rose and recited a long series of Latin Hexameters on the Sacrifice of Isaac. They might have been written two hundred years ago.

The priest took his seat, and the president said, "La Contessa Teresa Gnoli;" and a young lady, who had been the only lady on the stage during the evening, rose and commenced the recitation of some verses upon the meeting of Beatrice and Laura. If the first feeling of seeing her, had been one of half doubting, as to the womanliness of a position so different from any in which a lady would readily place herself among us, it disappeared so quickly as to be entirely forgotten in the admiration of the elegance, the grace and the perfect refinement with which this young lady delivered her poem. A delicate expression of sensitiveness and timidity was united with a fine, self-forgetful, self-possession in her bearing and manner. Nor was the charm of her manner greater than the sweetness of her voice, the grace and dramatic energy of her gestures and expression, the simplicity and taste of her dress. Her poem was musical and full of that tender feeling which the thought of Beatrice and of Laura might well awaken in the heart of a sensitive Italian woman. The audience were brought into sympathy with her, and in a rapture of delight, broke in upon her recitation with cries of "Cara," "cara," "bella," "bellissima." She sat down almost overwhelmed by the applause of her

\* Kaulbach was the pupil of Cornelius, though now the head of a sect adverse to his old master. For other instances of his manner, see his illustrations to Shakespeare. They are almost like the water.

not too enthusiastic listeners. The scene recalled the brilliant days of Italian letters, and for a moment this one graceful woman, with the fire of youth and poetry animated the old room, the languid audience, the pompous cardinals, and the decaying academy, with a life and spirit to which they were little used. The Contesina Gnoli is a descendant of Ariosto.

It would have been well had the performances of the evening ended here, but other poems followed. They were of that class which belong to a period of lifelessness, when originality is proscribed as a defect, imagination regarded as a heresy, and the copyist of ancient forms, more praised than the creator of new spirits. One alone was good as a brilliant and humorous piece of social satire; most of the others had the dull and musty odor of the cloister; all were written by men living where liberty of speech is dangerous, and liberty of thought only suspiciously and irregularly indulged. It is, perhaps, in such a place and at such a period that the most verses and the least poetry are written.

Everything is the subject of an ode or a sonnet, here in Rome. Six sonnets were written on occasion of the nun taking the veil at the convent of Santa Cecilia the other day (and this ceremony is not a rare one). There is a poetic chronicle of the commonest affairs; and the history of the Pope might be traced or lost in innumerable verses. Of pure improvisation there is little. Gianni, who died some years since, was one of the last of the famous improvisatori. A sonnet of his upon the death of Judas, improvised upon this subject being suggested to him, is a most striking specimen of rapid composition, not merely on account of the difficulties of the form and the complexity of the rhyme, but still more from the vigor of the expression, which runs, indeed, here and there into excess. It has not often been in print. The haste of composition is well shown, by the imperfect syntax of the fifth and sixth lines.

Al ora che Gruda di furor satollo  
Piombo dal ramo, rapido si mosse  
Il tatarul suo demone, e scontrollò  
Battendo le ali fumiganti e rosse

E per la fune che pendes dal collo  
Giù nel bolior delle Tartare fosse  
Appena con le forte unghie avventollo  
Che arser le carni e sibillar le osse.

E giunto nell'ignivoma bufera .  
Lo stesso orribil Satana fu visto  
L'accigliata spianar fronte severa.

Poi con le braccia incatenò quel tristo  
E con la bocca asagugliata e nera  
Gli rese il bacio che aveva dato a Oriso.\*

\* TRANSLATION.

That hour when Judas, filled with madness,  
hung from the tree, his guardian demon with  
rapid flight confronted him, flapping his smok-  
ing and red wings. And by the rope that hung  
about his neck, down into the boiling of the  
hellish ditch [he flung him]. Hardly had the  
demon snatched him with his strong claws,  
before his flesh burned and his bones hissed.  
And having reached the fiery whirlwind, horri-  
ble Satan himself was seen to smooth his wrin-  
kled brow severe. Then with his arms he  
enchain'd that wretch, and with his bloody  
and black mouth gave back to him the kiss that  
he had given to Christ.

This is one of that class of sonnets which the Italians call *sonnetti col botto*, "sonnets with a blow," the last line being concentrated and energetic beyond all the rest, and closing the sonnet with an explosion of force. It is a style less in favor now than of old; and a better taste shows itself in less ambitious and less striking but more simple and pleasing performances.

Monti wrote four sonnets upon the same theme with this of Gianni, but neither of them seems to me to possess an equal merit, and the horror of the subject is only to be forgotten in the display of the peculiar power of the improvisatore.

ART NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

LETTER XIV.

To the Editors of the Crayon:

LONDON, 20th April, 1856.

THE fourth volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters" made its appearance on the 14th instant. It is a very thick one, and considerably fuller of illustrations than the last; some from Turner, one or two from poor men, whom Ruskin uses as Turner's foils, and the majority by the author himself. Of the Turner's—one especially, the view of the mountain scenery about Goldau, with a strangely glorious, and flashing sky, ranks as high as any engraving that has been made from the master. Ruskin's own designs are admirable studies, chiefly of mountain-form—pure, finished, and full of meaning in every touch. I suppose no English professional artist living could produce works so conclusive of his knowledge of the subject. The matter of the volume consists almost exclusively of two main topics—Turner's principles of art, and an analysis of mountain-nature. The chapter on the Turnerian picturesque is a very interesting one; giving one of those masterly expositions of a class or element of art for which the author is famous, and much of which takes its place in the memory of individuals, and the mouths of numbers, as the final truth of the question. The Turnerian chapters are on the master's topography—light and mystery. The other part of the volume—the inquiry into the appearances and the spirit of mountain-scenery—is an extraordinary performance. The materials and the sculpture of mountains are considered at great length, and then the resulting forms—*aiguilles*, crests, precipices, banks, and stones. In the whole mass of Ruskin's writing, crammed as it is with observation, knowledge, thought, and suggestion, there is, perhaps, nothing which condenses into so small a space so vast a multitude of facts, broad and minute, investigated, experimented upon, and definitely certified. It is a labor which must inspire every human being who reads it, except a press-critic, with almost implicit deference for Ruskin's knowledge of the facts of Nature, and for the judgments which he asserts upon their rendering in art. Nor is there, even in this part of the volume, any want of speculation and theory, but always clearly separated from the truths which are set down as positive and ascertainable by the senses. It may be objected, however, that the investigation proceeds to an extent scarcely demanded in a work on "Modern Painters," and its severity is such as will make it, to the

general reader, the least attractive portion of the book. For all this, the volume abounds in those splendid passages of thought and imaginative description, which place Ruskin as far above all other writers on Art, in poetic power as his knowledge, grasp of mind, and searching accuracy raise him as a sure guide and authority. In passages of this kind the two concluding chapters—on the "Mountain Gloom," and the "Mountain Glory," are especially rich.

Two other Art volumes recently published, deserve—at a long interval of mental estimate—a word of record. Mr. H. P. Twining has issued the second portion of a work on "The Elements of Picturesque Scenery; or, Studies of Nature, made in Travel, with a view to Improvement in Landscape Painting." I read the first volume a few years ago, and thought it the work of a conscientious observer and a writer, well up in material, and not wanting independence; but thinking too much of rules and precepts to benefit others to any great extent. In fact, men of this class are swallowed up in Ruskin, who knows I cannot say how many times as much as the lot of them, thinks in a corresponding ratio of increase, and has the power of making you feel and love what they can only lecture. Writing on Art theories upon an extensive scale seems to me a thankless labor just now. One has the choice of being right, and so repeating Ruskin, and enfeebling him by the repetition, or else of being wrong, and so worth less or harmless. The man who shall be original, sound, and not founded upon Ruskin, is not within my knowledge. The other book is "The Science of Beauty as developed in Nature, and applied to Art," by Mr. D. R. Hay, of Edinburgh. It is a *résumé* of several works which he had previously published, promulgating a theory that the proportions which constitute beauty in form are reducible to the same ratio of number which constitutes beauty in sound, so that a Venus or an Apollo can be constructed by a system of angles identical with the system of tones or notes which construct the diatonic scale in music; and not an Apollo or Venus alone, but a Parthenon and a Lincoln Cathedral also. The theory is an ingenious one, ingeniously worked out, and enforced by cogent examples; but the artistic instinct revolts from it, or from any other theory passing the bounds of pleasant speculation, and in that sublimity of weakness which is its strength, determines to stick to perception, and to know as little as need be of the reason-why. However, if I may trust my own insight into the matter, Mr. Hay deserves among thinkers upon the philosophy of Beauty, as much honor for tracing a simple and comprehensive, if not universal law, as he would claim title thanks from art, if he availed to set artists constructing maps of the beautiful? on principle, instead of feeling what they need.

The Exhibition of the Society of British Artists opened towards the end of last month, and that of the New Water-color Society to-day. The former is distinguished by the appearance of two artists, both new, I think, to London, and one to any gallery. One of the two, Mr. J. Campbell, sends a picture named "Eave-droppers—the Asksings"—i. e. "Popping the Ques-

tion." This is being performed by a butcher-boy to a dairy-maid, in a kind of dim-lighted pantry; the "Eavesdroppers" being an elderly man and a boy, who crouch in a corner to enjoy the fun. But it is no fun to the butcher-boy or the dairy-maid either: both of them are what Carlyle so memorably calls "terribly in earnest." The expressions are full of life, character, and pathos: pathos, not by being forced beyond the every-day nature of the personages and situation, but by holding fast to the truth, without weakening and without affectation. Mr. Campbell has learned a true and interesting treatment of this well-worn theme from no source but nature and his own serious good sense; and the execution is equally excellent and unhackneyed. The ability in this picture appears to me to amount to genius, which ought to produce something of wide reputation. The other artist, Mr. R. W. Chapin, has a water-color of Pistol in his quarrel with Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet—a single figure; the expression capitally made out, the style of a quite superior order, the color unusually solid, clear and rich. This also promises no ordinary future. The *habitués* muster in their accustomed strength (or weakness); but there is nothing amid their contributions which need detain us. The Water-color Society make a feeble show. Something of the dissatisfaction with which a Londoner regards it, may doubtless be owing to his familiarity with the *kind* of thing; for he has seen the same Italianisms, and Orientalisms, and sea-side sketches, romantic towers, dells, meadows, copses, uplands, and lowlands, any time this dozen, twenty, or more years, according to the duration of his natural life. Perhaps, therefore, it is only the illusion of monotony on my senses which makes me feel, from this specimen, as if our not unworthily cherished water-color school were going down—becoming more slight, self-sufficient, and, if that is possible, more uninventive than heretofore. May the Old Water-color Society, whose exhibition is to open soon, solve the doubt satisfactorily. The beautifully-toned and tinted, and thoroughly, charmingly-felt little landscapes of Miss Fanny Steers are the only things which gave me much pleasure in the place. I think I spoke of this lady to you last year. Mr. I. Cook has some artistlike, finished, and well-filled coast views from Cornwall; and Mr. Philp, some less fully carried out, but natural and well-caught aspects of cliff, caves, and tide, from the same county.

While these exhibitions are open, the more important one of the Royal Academy is near opening. There will be a copious representation there of the principal Pre-Raphaelites. Hunt sends his picture of the Scapegoat—the only completed oil-picture which he has brought home from the East. Three water-colors; one from Jerusalem by moonlight, very grave, luminous, and beautiful; the Great Sphinx in the Desert, and the Plains of the Dead Sea. The Scapegoat consists simply of the figure (life size) of the young goat, his head bound with a red fillet, sent out to perish in the dreary, lifeless borders and salt ooze of the Dead Sea, or to save himself as he may, bearing upon him the burden of the sins of the congregation into "a land not inhabited." Sunset reddens the background with the broken front of the Idumean moun-

tains. To me the picture is a very solemn and impressive one; and, like all works in which these qualities are genuine, it becomes the more impressive the more I know it. Millais sends no fewer than five pictures. The largest is named "Peace Concluded;" an officer come home from the Crimea, seated with his wife and children, and reading the news of peace in the *Times*. One of the little girls has brought out her Noah's ark to show papa, and has selected the four symbolic animals of the warring nations—lion, cock, turkey, and bear—closing the series with the dove bearing the olive-branch. How far an invention of this calibre is to be approved, coming from a man who would invent the Huguenot, the Ophelia, and the Rescue, is a matter of serious question. The tenderness of expression in the wife is very lovely, and the children's heads are splendidly painted. In elaboration, the picture does not compete with Millais's previous master-pieces, but for vigor and certainty, it could not well be surpassed. The second picture—which I rate considerably higher—has still less subject, being only a group of young girls burning a heap of autumn leaves; but the whole treatment is of that *intense* order—intense and splendid color in glowing sunset, and a certain passionate feeling and tone throughout—where one does not demand subject, but recognizes the thing as a complete and noble artistic achievement of an order apart. For the qualities upon which the painter *does* rely here, he has never produced anything more admirable. The third picture is the most pathetic of all—a blind girl seated by a wayside bank, while a heavy shower is drying up, a sweep of sunshine brightening the lustrous fields, and a double rainbow shining in the sky. The blind girl's sister is turning round to wonder and enjoy, while her own poor lightless eyes are set motionlessly forward, under their drooping lids. The suggestion is a touching one, and most touchingly conveyed. This is Mr. Millais's most elaborately finished picture of the year. The fourth represents an old church attacked (as one may suppose), during the French revolution, and defended by a party of soldiers. A little girl has got wounded in the scuffle, and has been laid down to sleep on the effigy of an old Gothic Knight. The work is of minor importance, but very agreeable, and painted with great exquisiteness. The background figures, however, are not studied with a solidity worthy of Millais. The fifth picture is quite a small one—a portrait of a little boy looking over Leech's book of sketches from Punch. Besides these two *dii majores* of the P. R. B. reform, there is Mr. Hughes, a young painter full of capacity and of a charming sense of beauty; and Mr. Inchbold, a first-rate rising landscape painter. Hughes contributes first, a picture of Keats's Eve of St. Agnes in three compartments—the arrival of Porphyro at the castle by moonlight, the awakening of Madeline, and the flight of the lovers; and second, a picture named "April Love," of a pretty girl in a summer-house, having her hand kissed by a young fellow through the wicket, and seeming to say to herself, "Shall I forgive him?" There has, evidently, been a bit of a quarrel, and now comes the pleading for reconciliation. However, it will never do to be certain until the last moment, about

the pictures sent into the academy by men who have not yet achieved a noisy reputation, and whose works are not manifestly done *ad captandum*; for the academicians have a pretty knack of turning out the best things sent to them, which do not belong to either of these classes. Other works which I have seen or heard of, I leave for mention after the gallery shall have opened; but I may observe that the portrait of Robert Browning, by your countryman, Page, is among those forwarded for exhibition.

An important project is brewing at Manchester—amounting, it would seem, to the institution of a provincial "Crystal Palace." I think I mentioned before a plan for getting up at Manchester, a representation of the British school of painting, with portraits of the painters; but the project now in hand, if it be not in reality the same, will far surpass that in magnitude. The "Manchester Guardian" speaks of "a vast exhibition, to embrace and be limited to everything that can be fairly comprised within the title of 'art treasures;' which will not only include pictures, engravings, sculptures, and statuary, but every variety of works of art (as distinguished from works of industry, manufacture, machinery, and mechanism), that can be collected, of all ages and countries—especially articles of taste and *virtu*; bronzes, marbles, medals, and coins, gems in cameo and intaglio, works of art in every metal, and in many other substances, glass and china, ivory, wood, and stone; in short, everything that is not mere workmanship, but may fairly be classed as art. It is intended to have this exhibition on a scale commensurate with the importance and dignity of this great metropolis of the manufacturing district, and the means proposed are a large guarantee-fund, and the erection of an edifice of the magnificent character, if not the full dimensions of the "Crystal Palaces of Hyde Park and Sydenham." The notice which I have seen of this project, says nothing of whether the exhibition is to be temporary or permanent, I presume the former; if the latter is intended, the Manchester men seem to contemplate rivaling or surpassing the museum of decorative art, which has within the last few years, been well begun at Marlboro' House in London, under government auspices.

Amid the many suggestions which have been made for procuring a new site, and a new building for our National Gallery of pictures, as well as for concentrating our art possessions of various kinds, now scattered in separate collections and edifices, one of the most prominent, is the erection of a new gallery in the Kensington district, on an estate purchased by government out of the surplus funds, which occurred from our Great Exhibition of 1851. It appears that a glass and iron building (I presume only preparatory), has been in course of construction, and is now nearly ready for being planted upon the estate in question. Hither, it is reported, will be removed the whole or part of the museum of ornamental art just adverted to, which has already outgrown its present house-room. Perhaps something might be done here with the Turner bequest, and the Commissioners of the Exhibition Fund have suggested, that here might be got up a temporary collection of portraits, as preliminary and incentive to the foundation of the Nationa

Gallery of Portraits, which is in contemplation. Meanwhile, our existent National Gallery, not of Portraits, but of Paintings, has again got into its chronic state of hot-water—chiefly owing to the decried Veronese purchase. Members of Parliament were to knock off the salaries of its officers, newspapers write articles against the direction; Morris Moore and his fellow agitators send letters of a very decided character; and appearances altogether are so threatening, that one would not be surprised to hear of the resignation of Sir Charles Eastlake. Suppose that event to occur, what next? Shall we have one of the really best men in the country in Sir Charles's places, or some successor less eligible than himself, or shall we be re-committed to the old *régime* of trustee "noblemen and gentlemen?" I am much more apprehensive of the last chance, than hopeful of the first. Two new pictures have been added to the gallery since the Veronese; an Apostle, by Pordenone (a presentation or gift), which has some large form and color; and a Mantegna (a purchase) of the Virgin and Child, with the Baptist and the Magdalene, which is a very satisfactory acquisition, strongly characteristic of the master.

In the way of art-sales, I have to note that of the collection of works, knick-knacks as much more serious stuff, left by the late Colonel Sibthorp; and the sale of the Rogers collection is shortly to come off, and sets connoisseurs, gossips, and artists, on the *qui vive*.

I hear great things of the commemorative monument, which Marochetti is working at, for Scutari. There is to be an obelisk and that sort of thing, for the chief constructive feature of the work; and these are reported to me from a reliable source, as very much below par in design. But then, at the four angles, are to be four figures of colossal angels, each a repetition of the other; and these are spoken of as magnificently grand and solemn in effect, and mightily conceived; works of the very loftiest class of Christian sculpture. Marochetti, I suspect, will also get the commission for the Wellington monument to be erected in St. Paul's Cathedral. The non-acceptance of Bailey's and Foley's models for the purpose, and the consequent premature fluster about a supposed job in favor of Marochetti, were mentioned in one of my letters some months ago: now the competition is announced to be thrown open to the profession at large; Marochetti, it may be assumed, will take his chance with others; and, if merit, combined with high patronage obtains the mastery, there seems a more than probability, that the choice will fall to him.

A melancholy fate has overtaken one of our artists, Mr. Newenham—a painter of portrait and historical subject, not, indeed, of a high order, but of some repute and popularity at home. Possibly the engraving from his ideal portrait of Milton in Boyhood, may have reached America. The mind of this unfortunate artist has given way: he professes himself, to be Prince Imperial of Austria, and possessor of an infallible recipe for clearing off the national debt; and the last act of the tragedy which has been yet played out, is his enforced appearance in a Police Court, and committal to a lunatic asylum.

WM. M. ROSETTI.

## FRENCH LANDSCAPE.

Mezors Editors:

THE French landscape painters are chiefly remarkable as I think, in developing the *material* side of their branch of art. They excel in drawing, in modelling, in composition, in light and shade, in truth, delicacy and vigor of color, in harmony of tone, in texture, and generally in all that pertains to the outer substance. They have more photographic truth than any other school; not in painting every leaf and blade of grass, for this photography itself does not do, any more than Nature does, on the eye or mind: but in a certain free, naive handling, broad and transparent in the shadows, bold and full of pigment in the lights—in correctness and in the absence of the conventional, in their forms—and in truth of color. Generally they understand and grasp their subject. This is why they will take the simplest and greenest bit of country landscape, and make it attractive and refreshing; they make it *true*—not as a tyro in painting would do, by broad monotonous wastes of blue or green, grey or brown, but by scattering their warm and cool tints through every part—breaking one color over or beside another, guided by that instinctive sense of harmony in color which no painter can dispense with. Thus in their skies they obtain a luminous quality—abjuring the cold ultramarine, and letting a rosy ground show beneath their blue or the grey. So their greens are made of transparent undertones of brown, and over them green, yellow, grey, &c., and not like the monotonous greens of novices at the brush. In fine, they understand color to be not uniform and unvarying surfaces of paint, but broken, shifting, at the same time that the pervading local tint is seen. They recognize the fact, that in Nature the most pleasing bits of color are made up of a sort of mosaic, of an infinitude of warm and cool tints, all distinguishable if you look close enough; as in a rich-complexioned cheek—a clay bank partly covered with moss and other verdure—a surface of still water reflecting autumnal foliage, and a hundred other instances which every artist must recall having been charmed with.

Their manner of representing foliage has great excellences—the leaf-work being apparently dragged dry over their transparent underpainting, and with a full bristle-brush or palette-knife. To be sure, this process is sometimes carried to an excess, and results in furriness and disregard of form in the modelling of masses of foliage. In their skies, too, I think, they often paint too thickly and roughly. This is rather a common fault with them. In their feeling for color and form, they lose aerial qualities no less important.

In the subjects they choose, there is too little variety. The French *payasagistes* all go to Barbizon to study, many of them live there—and so paint forever that village and the surrounding forest of Fontainebleau. Or else it is some other piece of French landscape, usually very tame, requiring to be helped out by cattle and figures. Where all is so well done, we long for something else—a change of scene, sometimes—say the Alps or the Pyrenees, or the sea-side—anything but trees and cattle and country houses, with flat distances and flat unbroken

foregrounds forever. Rousseau's subjects especially, are as commonplace as "Jacques the peasant and his Wife," whom we are always meeting in these French pictures. You have seen such places a hundred times, as you have seen some common face in the street, one of a hundred of the same type. There is nothing in these places that interests you. You have crossed a dozen such in your morning ramble, without once turning round to look at it.

Rousseau seems to take a pride in making a picture out of nothing. To be sure, he paints it as few can. Pre-Raphaelitism itself must turn itself from its easel, where it sits plodding—"playing the spider with the hairs" of its portraits—and picking out leaf after leaf in its trees—and deign to recognize a brother in a rival. Yes—even English Pre-Raphaelitism must turn not only its learned head, but its whole body around, and acknowledge some merit in a Frenchman—*if not* look with jealous eyes on his skill and pains-taking.

We naturally ask for more than this photographic skill. We can make such pictures with the camera obscura. Still—partly our quarrel must be with French scenery—for painters must paint that which they are familiar with.

What they attempt to paint, they paint well. What they lack is Ideality in selection and in conception. There are men among them who have it—and who render well some of the more poetic phases of Nature. But generally they are very realistic. The first piece of landscape they see an emerging from the smoke of the town contents them, and they will sit down and patiently transfer it to canvas. Their works make you say, "this is Nature—this is truthful"—rather than, "this is poetic and suggestive." They recall something you have seen, rather than, bight something you would like to see. One would like a little more variety in subject—more subtlety, delicacy and mystery in treatment—in fine, a little more soul in the beautiful body they give you.

But this is a want not at all peculiar to the French and the French landscapists. All the schools of all the countries are in the same category—only, with no more stock of ideas, they have far less of that mechanical skill which distinguishes the French painters. Indeed, it seems to be the tendency of all art now-a-days to dwell more on the material side—to perfect itself in mere execution, to the comparative neglect of ideas. It is so in painting, book-illustration, sculpture, architecture, decorative and ornamental art, music, poetry. It is the age when execution outruns conception. And there seems to be this fatality about it, that in proportion to the artist's power over his materials, he merges in this, his "idea." We become too much fascinated with our mechanism. We tune our instruments and practise our voices, and hope by display of their power to become Orpheuses and Amphions. It is a tendency which the greatest artists yield to. Delacroix is carried away by harmony of tone and color, and becomes a splendid weaver of tapestry. Diaz, on a smaller scale, attracts by the fascination of color, but you discover nothing more. Even Decamps, with all his variety of subject, and fine poetic fancy, is evidently too much in love with his glazings and impastings, and his

pictures become, as they say here, *trop facile*. Vernet becomes a sort of Leopold De Meyer on his gigantic canvases—a Briareus with a brush in every hand, thundering and splashing here and there, improvising horses, camels, Arabs and French soldiery, *ad infinitum*—leaving about as much unity of impression as if a dozen bands of military instruments were performing together, each in its own time, and with its own power of trombone and drum. Couture fascinates you by the magnificent and voluptuous color of his *Décadence*, which extinguishes all the neighboring pictures, and makes you for the time forget the daring materiality of his treatment of this fine subject.

I cite a few of the greatest names among the French. I might swell the list indefinitely, taking examples from all the schools represented in the late Exposition, and with better grounds on which to illustrate what I have said—that Modern Art runs too fast and easily into the already prepared moulds of Material Mechanism. It is the central tendency of the artist, to make too much of the means—which must be counterbalanced by the centrifugal, that of seeking the end. The true medium is between the formless mysticism of the Idea, and idolatrous devotion to the Form. The artist must neither attempt, on the one hand, to soar above Nature, and lay claim to ideas not based on actual visible images; nor on the other hand, sink to the level of a vulgar and material, still less a *mannered* treatment—“subdued to what he works in, like the dyer’s hand.”

This mastery of their materials may account in part for the materialism of the French in art. You may see this materialism in all phases and degrees, ranging from a refined but quite literal love and study of Nature, down to the most thoroughly sensual or grotesque style. There is a legitimate and desirable materialism to be seen in their works, as well as an exaggerated or vicious materialism. They are materialistic, well and lawfully, in their accurate drawing and modelling from life and Nature, in their love of color—in their vigorous touch—in the truth and character with which both in painting and sculpture they render animals (the French have great fondness for animals)—in the representations of all scenes of movement and action, as in battle-pieces—in their great love of exactness and method in language, to the exclusion of all words and sentences which are nebulous and vague. One might trace this tendency under many forms. It is enough to indicate a few.

They are also viciously materialistic—as in their love of superfluous decoration in architecture—in their love of painting mere form and color, preferring the picturesque to the beautiful,\* in their ostentatious and

voluptuous modes of portraying the nude or half-nude female figure, and in subjects of a doubtful or immoral tendency—or which at least convey a “*double entendre*” (a sweet morsel that “*double entendre*” to the Frenchman) as in the *Cruelle Cassée* in the Louvre by Greuze, than which there is hardly a more popular picture known.

The utmost refinement and spiritualism of the French scarcely seems to soar quite free of this material slough—this chrysalis of the earth. Literal Nature is a good thing, surely, and literal pictures have their value and their place. But we crave a higher element. The raw material is not enough. Let the silk-worm give us the cocoons. We wait for the artist to weave us gorgeous silks of Syria and Damascus.

It is curious to see how they fail, when the French landscapists endeavor to go beyond mere literal rendering of Nature, and enter the regions of ideal landscape. An illustration of this, is seen in M. Corot. His admirers speak of his pictures as ideal representations of Nature—as dreamy, imaginative, Arcadian. I cannot, myself, see any such qualities in them. I recall our own Cole, as a genuine poet on canvas—in M. Corot, I see only the ghost of what a poet should be. His landscapes are cold, colorless and without vitality. Leaden, cheerless skies, misty grey distances, forlorn, unfinished furry-looking trees, water looking as if the chill of winter’s ice were hardly off it—they suggest to me little of the poetry and romance of Nature. Where are the divine luminousness of sky—the dreamy distance on distance, bathed in sunset or moonlight—the thick shadowy trees—the transparent water—the luxuriant grass and plants and flowers—the mossy rocks? If M. Corot conceives anything of this, he certainly does not do himself justice on canvas. It is a French imagination. Those landscapes are merely melancholy and unreal, without the vivifying and sustaining basis of Nature. They are like much of the so-called French poetry. Neither the glow of Claude nor the solemn gloom of Rembrandt are here. They are simply something novel—a reaction possibly from the realist school, but without interest enough to claim from us the distinctive name “Ideal.”\* There were other landscapes in the Exposition less pretending, and more poetic. A little *Sunset* by Cabot, and a fine *Twilight* in Fontainebleau Forest by Leon Belli I remember, the latter, especially lingers in my memory as very fine, and full of poetic feeling. Decamps too has very impressive bits of landscape as backgrounds to his figures.

Troyon has qualities that almost lift his works to the region of the poetic. His landscapes are as masterly and vigorous as his animals. They incline to the sketchy, but they are so juicy in tone, so full of subdued rich color—painted with such knowledge, yet with such love, that they always arrest attention, and repay a repeated study

Dutch and Flemish as well as the new French masters could lavish such splendor of color and such accuracy of finish on these ignoble subjects.

An almost parallel case may be cited in literature, Balzac in his novels aims at bare literal truth of character. Madame Sand goes to the other extreme and paints you characters, such as never existed and never could exist.

of them. To the student of color, they are particularly interesting. In one of the largest halls of the Exposition, surrounded by all that could test and try the merit of a picture, they keep their place as no other works of the same class of subject do. Seen away across the room, they still glow and attract—and this, not by glare and gaudiness, for they are the reverse of that, but by their wonderful color, harmony, truth and vigor of handling. In no master piece is that “*manière grasse*,” which the French aim at, so striking as in Troyon. His grey, cloudy skies are not cold, though covering so much of his canvas, nor painty though dashed in with such thick color. His trees, though sketchy, and when seen near, so ragged, are true in form; and though so dark in tone, they are yet transparent and full of delicate green in their shadows, firm and decided in their lights.

Troyon is so sure of himself, that he can afford to hang his picture without a particle of varnish, to bring out the full force of his color.

The English landscape painters, are thought by the English themselves, to be less literal and more imaginative than the French. It may be; but the difficulty is, that they have not yet learned to express themselves. They must first show more study of Nature, and a completer mastery of their paints, and thus be *material* and *literal*, before they can compete with their Gallic neighbors. A celebrated critic of art has termed Turner’s pictures “the ghosts of pictures.” The expression might be applied to the English landscapes generally. If the French paintings are *soul-less*, the English are *body-less*.

The Germans in the knowledge of their tools, are in advance of the English. When they can escape from the trammels of Düsseldorf, and dare to see with a fresh eye, and to work unincumbered by their rigidly academic manner, they produce admirable works in landscape. They always improve in proportion as they adopt the free, broad spirit of the French.

In America we know less of the landscape school of France, than of any other. We know the English school, chiefly through the fine engravings they give us of their own works, and which suggest more than is given in the originals. Düsseldorf we know by heart. But of the works of the Frenchmen most prized here, we know almost nothing. For this reason, it seems to me that Paris has admirable advantages for a young painter; and I hope to see the day when this fact will be known and appreciated among the brethren of the brush.

Yours, truly,

C. P. CRANON.

\* I saw a picture in a window the other day, of a dead hare, with a leek or onion in the foreground—in drawing and in color all that could be desired. The poor rabbit’s throat was cut, and the onion almost drew tears from your eyes. You can see plenty of such pictures in the market-stalls. That sort of thing has been done to weariness by the old Dutch masters. We look for something more in these days. Such pictures are like illuminated letters in the old missals—beautiful to look at, but expressing no idea. We often wonder how the old

“The fact is, there are only two fine arts possible to the human race, sculpture and painting. What we call architecture is only the association of these in noble masses, or the placing them in fit places. All architecture other than this, is in fact, mere *building*; and though it may it may sometimes be graceful, as in the groings of an abbey roof; or sublime, as in the battlements of a border tower; there is, in such examples of it, no more exertion of the powers of high art, than in the gracefulness of a well-ordered chamber, or the nobleness of a well-built ship-of-war.”—*Ruskin*.